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Greetings everybody. Attached and pasted below is a statement from the Government of Georgia on the recent espionage case. Best Regards, John

GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA PRESS STATEMENT

Evidence Against Photographers Suspected of Spying Released by Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Tbilisi City Court Orders Two Months Pre-Trial Detention for Three Suspects; Releases One on Bail

Tbilisi • July 9, 2011

On July 7, 2011, the Counter-Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia detained four Georgian citizens on suspicion of espionage: Irakli Gedenidze, a photographer for the Press Service of the President of Georgia; his spouse, Natia Gedenidze, photographer for the Georgian newspaper *Prime Time*; Zurab Kurtsikidze, a photographer for the European Pressphoto Agency in Georgia; and Giorgi Abdaladze, a photographer for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MIA).

Three of the four suspects—Zurab Kurtsikidze, Irakli Gedenidze, and Giorgi Abdaladze—were charged with espionage under article 314 (par. 1) of Georgia's Criminal Code, while Natia Gedenidze was accused of abetting espionage. The Tbilisi City Court sentenced Kurtsikidze, Gedenidze, and Abdaladze to two months pre-trial detention, and released Natia Gedenidze on bail. The court hearing for the case is scheduled for September 1, 2011.

The arrests came after a years-long investigation, which revealed that Kurtsikidze was in contact with officers of the Main Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Defense of Russia (GRU); specifically, he communicated with Anatoly Sinitsin and Sergei Okrokov, both of whom are wanted by Georgian law enforcement agencies for espionage. Among the evidence gathered during the investigation are mobile telephone communications data records proving Kurtsikidze's contacts with Sinitsin and Okrokov.

The investigation also revealed that Kurtsikidze maintained regular contact with several Russian citizens in Moscow to whom he conveyed top secret and confidential documents gathered by the other three suspects who were detained. Abusing their status as state employees, Gedenidze and Abdaladze photographed classified materials, which they then transferred to Kurtsikidze for monetary compensation; Kurtsikidze in turn sent the photographs of the classified documents to Moscow.

An MIA search of the personal computers owned by Gedenidze and Abdaladze revealed classified documents; photos of floor plans of the Presidential Palace—the building that houses the President and his administration; information about the President's itinerary; details of the President's visits and meetings; and information about the personnel of the President's Administration. The same files also were found on Kurtsikidze's computer.

Today, the MIA released some of the evidence that has been gathered, including the testimonies of Irakli and Natia Gedenidze; telephone conversations between Kurtsikidze, Gedenidze, and Abdaladze about money transfers; and copies of some classified documents retrieved from the suspects' computers. Among the documents is a detailed plan of the security measures implemented by the MIA and the Government Protection Special Service of Georgia during a visit of a high-level foreign official hosted by President Saakashvili; there also is a complete list of all Georgian citizens working in the United Nations system; and there are images of the floor plans of the Presidential Palace.

This evidence can be seen at: <http://police.ge/index.php?m=8&newsid=2642>,
<http://police.ge/index.php?m=8&newsid=2642&lng=geo>.

According to his testimony, Gedenidze began transferring information to Kurtsikidze in exchange for monetary compensation soon after he began working in the press service of the President's Administration in 2006. Initially, Kurtsikidze asked Gedenidze to provide him with photos of the President's meetings, trips, and events—as well as with descriptions of the places and people featured in them—in order to sell these illegally to a photo agency in Moscow. Later, Kurtsikidze asked Gedenidze to share confidential information about the President and his Administration—unrelated to his duties as the President's photographer—and blackmailed him by threatening to reveal the earlier illegal sale of photos if he stopped cooperating. As a result, Gedenize continued to act on Kurtsikidze's instructions.

The MIA's Counter-Intelligence Department is continuing its investigation of the case.

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The Podesta Group provides representation to the Government of Georgia. Additional information is on file at the US Justice Department.